

## Diversity Within Islam

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# CREative and REinspiring Annual RE Conference 2022

An inspiring day of RE CPD  
**'CREative and REinspiring RE Conference'**  
in conjunction with  
Wiltshire, Dorset and BCP SACRES



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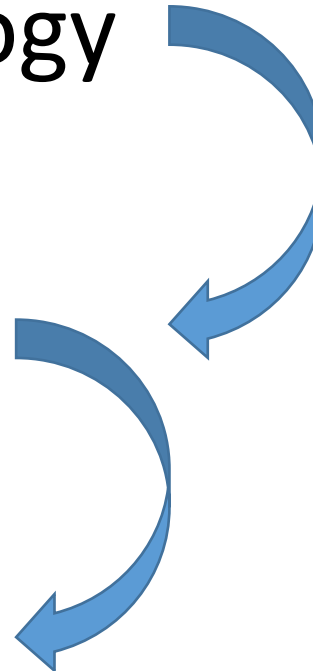
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**#ReReRE2022**



## Why is there diversity in Islam?

- Difference in epistemology
  - Difference in worldview
  - Difference in practice
- 



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## The Sunni-Shia split – why does it matter 1400 years later?

Sunni Perspective	Shia Perspective
God stops picking leaders – prophethood ends.	God continues picking leaders – prophethood ends, Imamate begins.
Religious leadership is now a community matter – Muhammad left no successor.	Religious leadership remains a divine matter – God chose a successor to Muhammad.
The Muslim community appointed Abu Bakr as first caliph (leader) to succeed Muhammad.	Allah chose Ali to be successor to Muhammad which Muhammad clearly announced before death.
Abu Bakr, Umar ibn al Khattab, Uthman ibn Affan and Ali (four rightly guided caliphs) are successors to Muhammad.	Abu Bakr, Umar ibn al Khattab and Uthman ibn Affan usurped Ali's rightful position.
The best way to understand the Quran and Muhammad is through his companions.	The best way to understand the Quran and Muhammad is through his family (Imamate).
Islam flourished due to the early Muslims	Early Muslim decision led to oppression of Muhammad's family and Islam went in wrong direction.



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## Islamic Epistemology

### Sunni Sources of Authority

- Quran
- Prophet Muhammad (as portrayed by the companions of Muhammad)
- Companions of Muhammad

### Shia Sources of Authority

- Quran
- Prophet Muhammad (as portrayed by the family of Muhammad)
- Muhammad's family (Imamate)

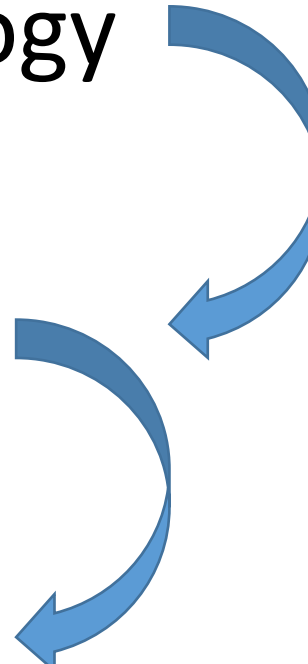
#### Implications:

A completely different **Quran interpretation**. A completely different **history**. A completely different **Muhammad**.



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## What language to use in Islamic worldviews

Problematic Language	Better Language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Sect</b> – discredits minority groups as offshoots / insignificant. In reality, every ‘sect’ in Islam will consider themselves as the true, orthodox Islam, no matter how small their numbers.</li><li>• <b>Liberal / Conservative / Progressive</b> – such words do not exist in Islam. Why are western frameworks being applied to Islam? Negative connotations if you are ‘conservative’ and ‘progressive’/‘liberal’ deemed as accepting.</li><li>• <b>Islamists / Jihadists</b> – such words do not exist in Islam and should not be in RE classroom unless discussing tabloids!</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b><i>Schools of thought</i></b> – recognises scholarship</li><li>• <b><i>Some Muslims conclude</i></b> – recognises process of thought</li><li>• <b><i>Muslim perspective</i></b> – recognises there is more than one way to look at things</li></ul>



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## Worldview Example - Salafi (Sunni)

- Comes from the Arabic phrase, al-Salaf al-Salih – first three generations of Muslims are best Muslims and have purest Islam.
- Any belief or practice that isn't sourced from this early Islamic period is heresy.
- **“The best people are those of my generation, then those who come after them, then those who come after them.”** (Hadith of Muhammad, Source: Bukhari)
- Reactionary to Islamic teachings being 'diluted' by other influences.
- Key scholars: Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab (hence sometimes referred to as Wahhabis from outside) and Ibn Taymiyyah.
- Association with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf regions.

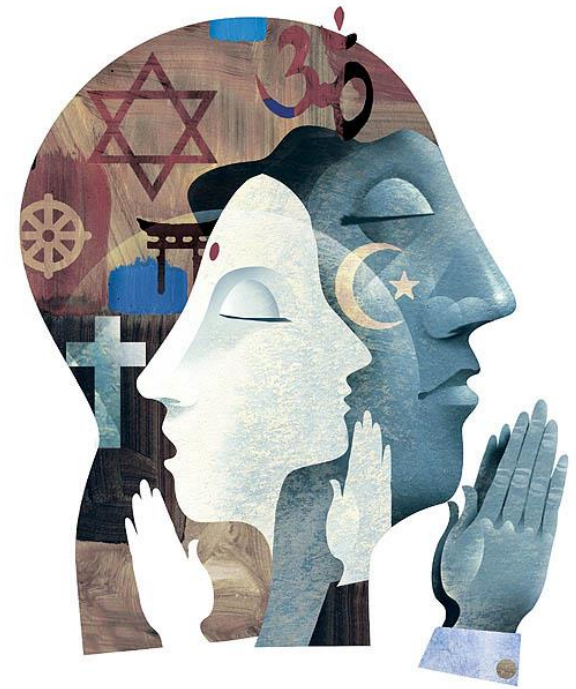




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## Worldview Example - Pluralistic

- 'Islam' as 'submission to God' rather than name of organised 'religion'.
- Muslim is a verb, not a noun – open to everyone, not just a follower of the Islamic 'religion'. 'Muslim' seen as someone who 'submits to God' more so than the name of a follower of the 'religion' of Islam.
- ***“And whoever seeks a religion other than **Islam**, it will never be accepted of him”*** (Quran 3:85)
- ***“And whoever seeks a religion other than **submitting to God**, it will never be accepted of him”*** (Quran 3:85)
- World is one spiritual community trying to submit to God and seek His guidance. God only sent one religion – submission to Him.
- Any sincere worship from another 'religion' of One God is of same value. Participation in other types of worship is acceptable.
- Salvation is just as possible as for Muslims.



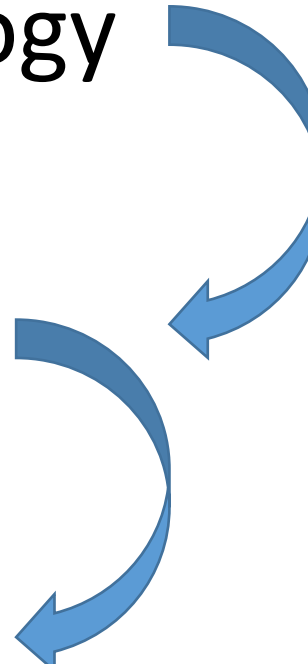
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## Worldview Example - 'Sectarian'

- **'Non-sectarian': 'I am Muslim' and refuse to label as Sunni or Shia.**
  - Muslim unity is most important
  - Unity means to look past differences with no need to discuss them.
  - Sometimes prepared to compromise opinions to please the other.
- **'Sectarian': will specify Sunni or Shia**
  - Proud of identity and it is important to label yourself
  - Must talk about differences and distinguish between others.
  - Will not compromise so other is pleased
  - Will not compromise on narrative of Islamic history to not offend others.
  - Has negative connotation, but is it? Only negative if ideology is negative.
  - Sectarian in identity but not in ideology.
  - Unity = you have your narrative and speak about it openly, and same for us.



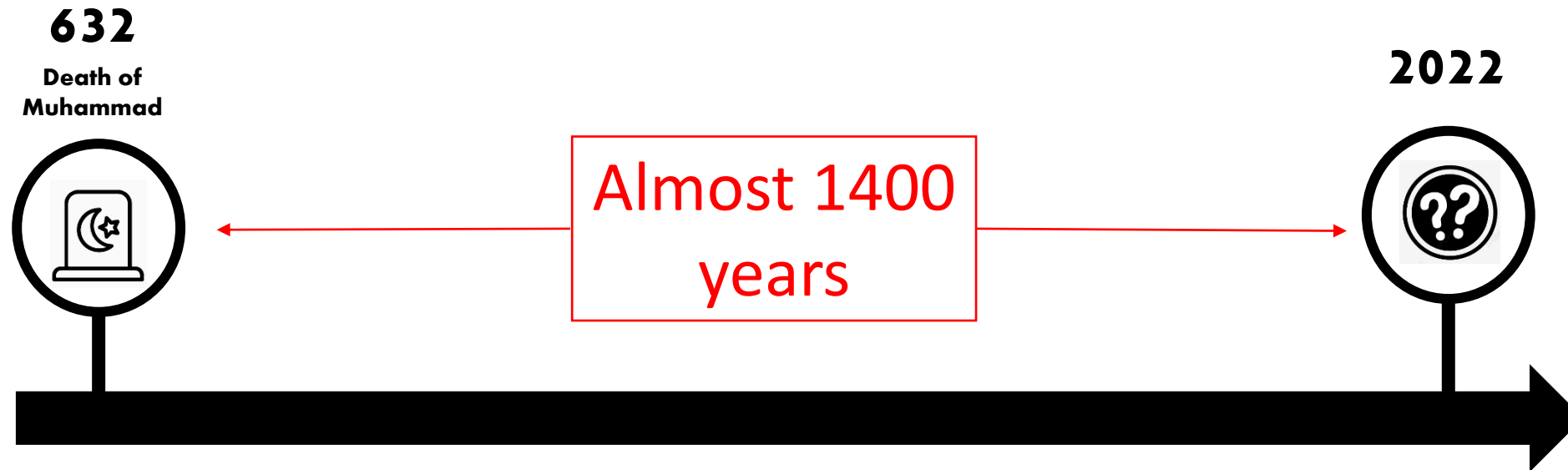
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## Development of Islamic Thought

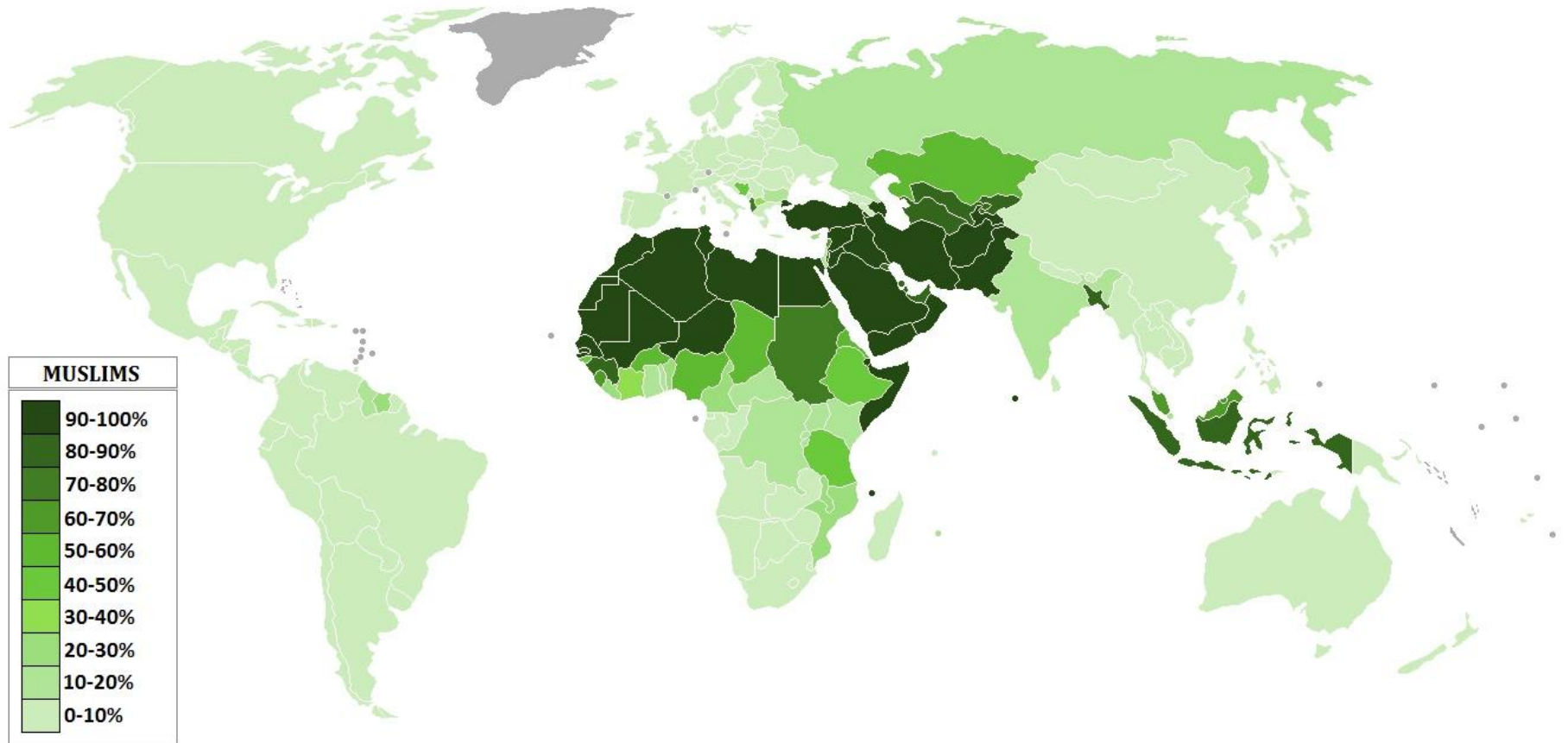


- When Muhammad was alive, Muslims were able to ask him directly any questions they had and he would answer.
- His death presented a challenge – as time went on, new ideas emerged and Muhammad was not there to answer questions. Muslims could refer to the Quran and Hadiths but what if these didn't have a clear answer?
- This caused different opinions / interpretations to emerge since direct access to Muhammad was not available.



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## Development of Islamic Thought



- Geography also had a major impact on the way Muslims thought and behaved.
- When Muslims moved to countries where the majority of people had a different view, this would influence the way they think and behave.
- When new converts joined Islam, their previous beliefs would influence how they



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## Expressions of Islam differed whilst attempting to remain within law



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## Why is there diversity in law? - IJTIHAD

The Messenger of Allah sent Mu'adh to Yemen and the Prophet said:

**How will you judge?**

Mu'adh said, "I will judge according to what is in the Book of Allah."

The Prophet said: **What if it is not in the Book of Allah?**

Mu'adh said, "Then with the tradition (*sunnah*) of the Messenger of Allah."

The Prophet said: **What if it is not in the tradition of the Messenger of Allah?**

Mu'adh said, "Then I will strive to form an opinion (*ijtihad*)."

The Prophet said: **All praise is due to Allah who has made suitable the messenger of the Messenger of Allah.**

Source: Tirmidhi

- ***“Islamic legal term meaning independent reasoning”*** (John Esposito)
- Roots in ‘jihad’ (struggle) i.e. struggle using independent reasoning and Islamic sources to come to conclusion.
- Used primarily in Islamic law to respond to new issues that have no direct comment from Quran and Sunnah.



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## Who dictates law?

- Is there are a 'referee' today to decide what is true Islam?
- No central Pope-like authority in Islam today for the majority of Muslims.
- **"Ask those who know"** (Quran 16:43)
- **"The scholars are the inheritors of the prophets."** (Hadith of Muhammad, Source: Tirmidhi)
- Mujtahid (highest ranking Muslim scholar in law) – has authority only in legal field.
- Mufti (Sunni Mujtahid) – perhaps limited to country of residence.
- Ayatollah (Shia Mujtahid) – possible central authority for Shia Muslims, in all fields, in absence of 12th Imam.
- Personal Worldview of Mujtahid has inevitable influence, no matter how objective they try to be.





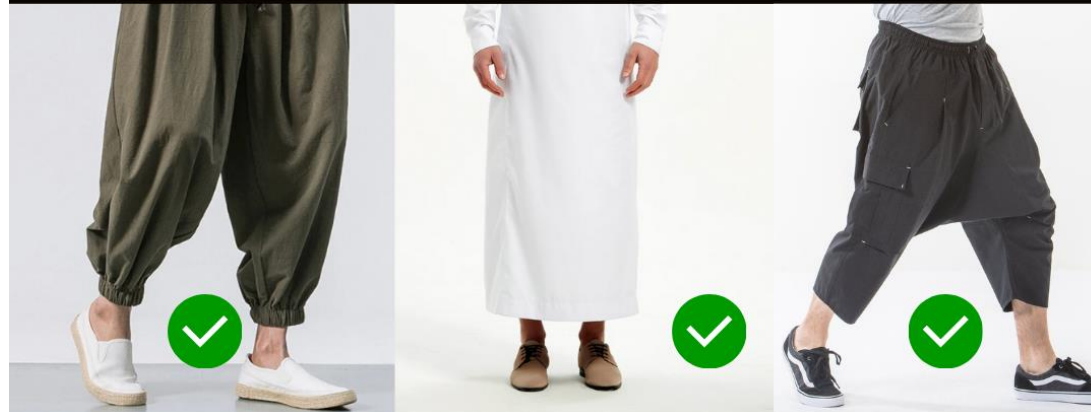
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## Ijtihad Example



The Prophet ﷺ said: **"Whatever is below the ankles from the lower garment will be in the Fire."** (Al-Bukhāri, no. 5787) Ibn Bāz stated: "The man is not excused for dropping the hem of his garments below his ankles because the authentic ahādeeth that forbid isbāl are encompassing and general in wording, meaning and intent."


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## Ijtihad Example

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:  
“Were it not for the fact that I did not want to make things too hard for my ummah, I would have **commanded** them to use the siwaak at every time of prayer.”  
*(al-Bukhaari, 2/299 and Muslim, 1/151)*



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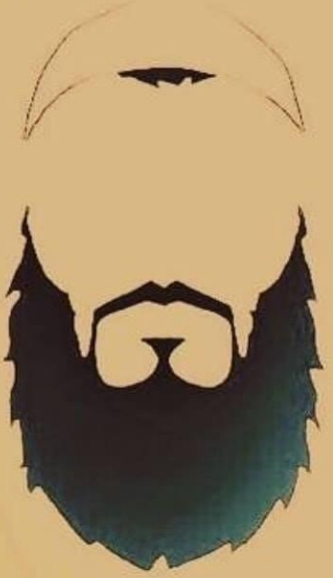


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## Ijtihad Example

IBN `UMAR  NARRATED:  
**THE PROPHET صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ SAID,**

"DO THE OPPOSITE OF  
WHAT THE PAGANS DO.  
**KEEP THE BEARDS**  
AND CUT THE  
MOUSTACHES SHORT."  
SAHIH AL-BUKHARI 5892



**AND**  
**ORDERED US**  
TO TRIM  
THE MOUSTACHE  
CLOSELY AND  
**SPARE THE BEARD.**  
SAHIH MUSLIM 2598

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## Ijtihad Example

“Among my ummah there will be people who will regard as permissible adultery, silk, alcohol and musical instruments.”

Rasoolullah said,  
Narrated by al-Bukhaari (5590)

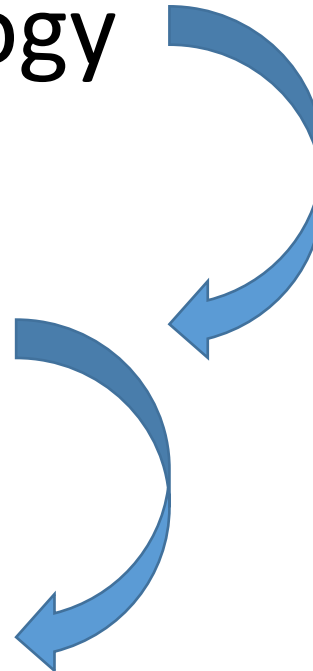
### GRAND SHAYKH OF AL AZHAR:

"LISTENING TO MUSIC, ATTENDING MUSICAL GATHERINGS, AND STUDYING MUSIC OF ALL GENRES AND INSTRUMENTS IS ALLOWED AS LONG AS IT IS NOT ACCOMPANIED WITH IMMORAL AND SINFUL ACTS, OR USED AS A PRETEXT TO INCITE PEOPLE TOWARDS HARAM (PROHIBITED) BEHAVIOUR, AND IT DOES NOT PREOCCUPY A PERSON AWAY FROM OBSERVING THE OBLIGATORY ACTS OF WORSHIP."



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Questions

